

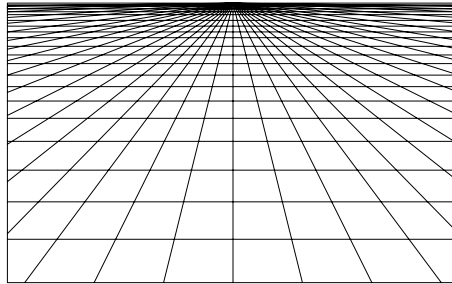


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Branding Identity with Apple's iPod

Constructing Meaning and Identity in a Consumption Culture by using Technological
Equipment

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The Politics of Knowledge: Assessing and Communicating Risk
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SYNOPSIS

This thesis shows how Apple's mp3 player iPod can serve as an example for how people construct meaning and identity through the use of particular objects while living and participating in a consumption culture. The empirical examples are derived from complex and contextual analysis of iPod; I have performed and analysed four qualitative interviews, various Internet pages, and advertisements for the gadget. In addition, I have in general been observant on how this phenomenon has been visible in urban life, and will give examples of these findings. It will be shown how technology and music are the two given aspects concerning the use of iPod, while the social and societal aspect become a consequence. The innumerable existing websites concerning this gadget, where people can discuss various aspects of the use of iPod, shows that people have a need to share their interest with others. I have seen and explained this as an example of how people living in a modern culture recognized by consumption have a need to share values and experiences to feel integrated in a social setting. This is shown in particular through the use and possession of the *brand* iPod. The thesis is written within the academic fields STS (Science and Technology Studies) and Cultural Studies.

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1 Introduction

For my master thesis, I have decided to write about consumer behaviour in general and the case of the mp3 player iPod from Apple as a brand in particular. It will be used as an example of how identity and meaning can be created and maintained through using technological equipment in everyday life.

I am interested in consumption as a phenomenon because I believe it to be a very important aspect of the discussion of modernity. Can some social aspects of consumerism be seen as replacing a psychological need for belonging to a community through creating and maintaining a social identity? A modern consumption society is a changing society, and can because of this be seen as hard to grasp. It is characterized by economical growth, which is possible to maintain when people feel the need to change their old products into new ones. Hence, the core of consumption is that people all the time strive for changing their goods into new goods. As I will show later, these needs are presented to people by diverse advertisements and intense marketing of products. The difference between having basic needs fulfilled and striving for possessing luxury commodities will be discussed in chapter 4. It is important to have in mind that although a society is recognized as a consumption society, it is not necessarily the fact that all its inhabitants have their basic needs fulfilled (Lury, 1996). I will in this discussion use Maslow's *hierarchy of needs* as theoretical framework.

Consider how technology and your life are interlinked. It is not much you can do that is not linked to technology in one way or the other. Technology in its broadest sense is everywhere, and we are more dependent than ever upon it working. I will in my thesis concentrate on technology as a tool for pleasure; equipment that is not fulfilling any basic

needs, but rather could be seen as a luxury good. Commodities used in everyday life while trying to give life its content (Ihde, 1990). As the example of iPod and consumption culture is a phenomenon interlinked with strong economy – both on personal and national level – it is relevant for my thesis that my empirical findings are mostly from Norway and France, two countries recognized by high standard of living. I performed the first half of my study as I lived in Strasbourg, France, and the final process took part in Oslo, Norway. In addition my stand is inevitably coloured by the fact that I am Norwegian, and raised within the norms and rules that follow from being part of a consumption society.

When analysing the phenomenon of iPod, I have among other used Michael Bull's theory. Bull has studied how people manage everyday life through their use of personal stereos (Bull, 2000). He is now writing a follow-up book where he will write about mobile technology you can listen to music through in general, and iPod in particular. He will see how it is used in an everyday context, as to see if the change in technological format (mp3 players have larger capacity for storage of music) leads to different user patterns. I have discussed with Bull through email. Looking into the questionnaire presented to his informants I see that his focal point will be somewhat the same as the one he has used before.

My thesis can be seen as an example of a study within the broad field of *Cultural studies*. I will give a short introduction to this field in chapter two, and thus explain why this study should be seen within this framework. It can also be seen as an example of a study within the field of STS (Science and Technology Studies) since I am writing on the social and societal amplifications of the technological gadget iPod.

My study is no example of a rigid empirical work, as I have chosen to study the example of iPod in a complex, contextual way within the consumption society. During the months I have studied iPod as a phenomenon, it has in an increasing way been visible in the urban life that I am present in. This includes articles presenting and discussing iPod (in newspapers, various magazines and on Internet), an increasing part of the population using iPod (recognized through the white ear buds), marketing of the product and various websites containing discussions on the subject. I have concentrated my analysis on some of these aspects. Besides viewing different websites, I have in particular analysed the site www.ipodlounge.com. Of advertisement, I have in particular analysed three different videos marketing iPod. I have in addition performed four interviews with users of iPod. This has resulted in a typology of three stereotypes; *Sociopod*, *Technopod* and *Musicpod*. In addition I will present one of the informants excluded from the typology. The reason for this will be presented together with the typology in chapter two. To see whether my informants acknowledge my typology or not, I have discussed it with them afterwards. They identified with the categories I have put them in, supporting my assumptions. What may seem unusual in my thesis is the large amount of references from the Internet. Since iPod is a high technological tool, and still a quite new phenomenon, it has been both interesting and necessary to follow the discussion and contextual presentation of iPod in cyberspace. All Internet addresses I am referring to in the text are given. Unfortunately, since Internet content is constantly changing, I can not guarantee that exactly the same will be found on another day than when I found this.

Beside these analyses, I have on a daily basis discussed iPod with users and non-users, and paid extra attention to how it in a complex way is affecting the consumption

society in general and its members in particular. I will give examples from my various findings during the discussions. However, it is important to have in mind that I have not performed a rigid empirical analysis that is representative for any population. What I present is examples of a tendency I have seen. When it comes to the typology I present, it shows a tendency I have identified. Whether it is representative or not for users of iPod could be interesting to see in an extended study, where both quantitative and qualitative methods are interlinked. My empirical examples will be interwoven in the thesis, and thus will not be presented and analysed separately.

I will present the iPod more thoroughly in chapter two. The technological sides of it will not be presented in detail. My purpose has been to see the social sides of this phenomenon. Instead it will be shown how it can be used, and how its appearance makes it differ from other mp3 players as well. This in addition to my main point; the social aspects interlinked with it. I am not concerned with the psychology of individuals, but how identity can be explained as a social, cultural phenomenon. My assumption is that people strive to maintain their identity as social individuals through belonging to specific communities and groups. Hence, when I use the term identity, I am actually writing about *social identity*.

My interest for the mp3 player iPod started not with the player itself – but with the *brand* iPod, as shown by Apple in several commercials and advertisement. I have an interest concerning overall implementation of using new technology in everyday life and also concerning mass consumption. I wondered whether it was possible to link these two interests through seeing iPod as a technological tool used in everyday life, being used in

mass consumption societies. Whether this is the case or not will hopefully be revealed throughout the thesis.

2 Technology and Cultural Studies

2.1 Cultural studies and STS

I have seen the object iPod presented in different contexts, through various perspectives; it has both social and societal implications. Modern culture can be seen as something distinguished from earlier times, and the phenomenon I am describing is mostly seen in societies with an urban culture (in Oslo, Strasbourg and Paris and other large cities). When I refer to the term *culture*, I mean something shared by a group of people, like common values and hobbies. I am in my thesis also concerned with the cultural aspect of music and design as examples of shared values. As mentioned before, I have tried to perform a cultural analysis, writing within the academic field *cultural studies*¹. Cultural studies is a field that evolved in the 1950s in Great Britain. It started as a follow up from a study of literature called Leavisism – where the focal point was to understand how people created understanding and meaning of life through reading classical literature, and how it meant more than simple pleasure to them. “Leavisites fiercely insisted that culture was not simply a leisure activity; reading ‘the great tradition’ was, rather, a means of forming mature individuals with a concrete and balanced sense of ‘life’. The main threat to this sense of life came from the pleasure offered by so-called ‘mass culture’” (During, 1993, p. 2). Cultural studies has become a broad category for studying various cultural objects and phenomena. There is not *one* strict methodology within this field. Rather it is an aim to try to see a phenomenon from more sides, and take advantage of strengths from more academic disciplines. Therefore it should be understood as a multi disciplined field.

¹ An example of a study performed within this academic discipline, concerning a related topic to my thesis, is Du Gay et al. (1997). *Doing Cultural Studies: The Story of Sony Walkman*. Sage Publications Ltd.

From my point of view, this can be seen as strength, not being restricted to follow specific rules that often exist within original disciplines. “Cultural studies is not an academic discipline quite like others. It possesses neither a well-defined methodology nor clearly demarcated fields for investigation” (During, 1993, p. 1). During explains further in his *Cultural Studies Reader* how the multifaceted discipline has evolved and what was the background of the field – “it concentrated on ‘subjectivity’, which means that it studied culture in relation to individual lives, breaking with social scientific positivism or ‘objectivism’” (ibid.). Being multi disciplined and containing different methodological tools, it is quite different from other fields studying culture, like anthropology and other disciplines dealing with cultural aspects.

As my example in this thesis is a particular technological gadget and its social and societal amplifications, it follows naturally that my study also should be understood within the framework of STS. STS is a relatively new field within the academic era. STS researchers ask whether the social context is relevant for the results found. There are many examples of this kind of research, and many scientific environments have been studied. STS can be seen as an example of cultural studies, as one aim is trying to understand and explain science and technology from a broad, cultural perspective. Like cultural studies, STS cannot be said to have agreed upon one definition of how to carry out empirical studies (as understood in Thomas Kuhn's concept of paradigms). Those fields can rather be explained and recognized by their complexity; including scientists with various backgrounds, using different methods in reaching their goal. As presented in the introduction, I have also used several methodological tools to see the complexity of iPod and its surrounding culture. The common feature of the tools I have used makes it

an example of a qualitative study. I am describing a complex phenomenon rather than trying to generalise based on statistical information. The empirical examples I have found are seen in relation to theories on similar subjects. I have also read empirical work on how objects in general and technology in particular affect people's life. In the process of analysing the empirical material, I have as researcher used my experiences from Hermeneutic interpretation, where one goal is to move back and forth between theory and empirical examples to reach a higher level of understanding. I will not present findings that can or should be generalized to any population; rather I have tried to state a tendency through my cultural analysis of this complex phenomenon.

2.2 The walk towards iPod

In the 80s, the Walkman was a new technology. It made it possible to listen to music and play your cassettes, even if you were out walking, on the bus – wherever you wanted. The Discman replaced the Walkman in the 90s, but this did not change anything else than the cd's replacing the cassettes. The medium was the same. It works like a cd or cassette player, only it is small, and hence – mobile. The mp3 player works in a different way.

MP3 stands for Motion Picture Experts Group, Audio Layer 3. A popular music download format. MP3 produces CD-quality music in a compressed file that can be transferred quickly, and played on any multimedia computer with MP3 player software. The technology creates sound files a tenth the size of standard CD music files with very little loss of sound quality
(<http://www.computeruser.com/resources/dictionary/definition.html?lookup=7985&pg=2>).

This implies that an mp3 player is a different technology than the earlier portable stereos.

The music is stored by the user into a memory stick within the player – and hence, you are listening to files of music. The practical difference from the old players is that it is

possible to store the equivalent of many cd's in one medium. On mp3 players, you can carry your whole selection of cd's in one technological tool, in one small gadget.

Further, an mp3 player can be explained as a modern version of the old Walkman. Its most important function is that it is a portable personal stereo. As written earlier, iPod is an example of an mp3 player. With iPod, you can carry your whole selection of cd's in one technological tool the size of a large wallet. The storage capability is one way in which the iPod differs from other mp3 players. Another, more important way it differs is in the design. This aspect will be presented later in the text.

iPod is an example of a tool made for pleasure, for people living in a busy world – wanting to enjoy time the most. It is possible to listen to music whenever you want, wherever you want, and you can listen to what music you want. It fits into the overall expression of modern people wanting to have several opportunities all the time.

iPod is a product that is thought to be for the purpose of a long lasting “friendship” – with the product being bought, but also with Apple. When buying an iPod, you become devoted to Apple, in the sense that you have to use Apple's software program for transferring mp3 files from a computer to the mp3 player – iTunes. This software program follows in the package when you buy iPod. In addition, Apple presents various accessories to be used together with the iPod – and all the time they try to make new products for this purpose. The fact that iPod is to be used together with iTunes also opens for a never-ending consumption through the use of mp3 player. Besides being a program, iTunes is a service that lets its users download songs from the Internet – but not for free. You pay a certain amount of money for each song downloaded (<http://www.apple.com/itunes/>). This service is not available in all countries selling iPod,

but has become a great hit in the States where it was first launched. The still quite new trend of selling songs and albums through the Internet is a big challenge for producers of music. This can be seen as changing the consumption of music, and is affecting both social and economical aspects (Garofalo, 2004).

2.3 iPod – History and Technology

The iPod I am presenting in this thesis has come in different editions after the first one was launched in 2001. Apple present the different editions as different *generations* of iPod. The first generation iPod (1G) came in October 2001 – with 5 Gigabyte (GB) storage capacity. The second (2G) was launched in March 2002 – with 10 GB. In July of the same year a version with 20 GB was presented. The third generation (3G) represented a slightly changed version from the former generations (being thinner, and with changes to some technical details) and a version with 15 GB storage capacity came in April 2003. These three generations of iPod all have in common that they are made in the classical design that follows Apple's iPod.

([http://www.ipodlounge.com/articles_more.php?id=4280_0_8_0_Two cultures](http://www.ipodlounge.com/articles_more.php?id=4280_0_8_0_Two%20cultures)). It is made with white surface, followed by white ear buds, and every version is sold together with software for the music program iTunes (as presented earlier). An example of how an iPod looks can be seen in the picture below

(http://www.clanmacgaming.com/articles/images/ipod/ipod_buds.jpg).



The iPod presented here has a quite big screen, a scrolling wheel with a button in the middle and small sensors hidden under the surface. It also has four extra buttons. In addition there is a “hold” button on the top of the iPod, in case you push the other buttons unintentionally while listening to another song.

In 2004, an iPod with a different design came: The iPod mini. It is sold in five different metallic colours, but is still followed by the easily recognizable white ear buds (<http://www.apple.com/ipodmini/>).



These were examples on the generations of iPod being present while I am writing. I expect that there are more generations of iPod to come, since the product has been and still is successful for Apple.

When iPod was first launched it differed from other mp3 players in its great storage capacity. Besides this, being an Apple product, the focus on it being a *designed* technological gadget is important. Apple is a company that since its beginning has focused on technology and design. When they made iPod, they did what they already knew how to do and added music as an extra factor. Everyone has a relation to music, in one way or another. By adding this factor they have reached more customers than they did when selling computers and other technological tools. “Music hits people’s emotions, and buying something that opens up one’s entire music collection – up to 10,000 songs in your pocket – makes for an intense relationship.” (Levy, 2004, p. 44).

In late October, Apple announced its first non-computer product in several years, the iPod. The iPod was a small hard-drive-based digital music player, and represented Apple's first hardware addition to its "digital hub" strategy. At \$399, the iPod faced a similar challenge to the woeful G4 Cube: it favored style and form-factor over price. Apple was taking another gamble by charging a premium for the iPod's superior design and small size (<http://www.apple-history.com/frames/body.php?page=history§ion=h8>).

The first iPod could only be used together with a Mac (a computer made by Apple). When they launched the next edition of iPod, they had made it compatible with Windows as well – and in that way they made it accessible to more people than the few users owning a Mac. Besides using the personal stereo function, it is also possible to store other files on iPod (i.e. photographs and text files). Instead of a pen-drive, you can use the iPod to transfer files from one computer to another.

2.4 The Typology of iPod Users.

There are probably as many different ways of using iPod as there are users. Nevertheless, I have chosen to create a typology as to make some aspects clear.

Three of the persons I interviewed represent three characteristics of users. I have called them *Sociopod*, *Technopod* and *Musicpod*. These words will refer to how I use them in my thesis, and hence not refer to other possible explanations. One of the four informants can be seen as something in between the different *pods*, and stands out in being the only one that is quite sceptical to technology's impact on people's everyday life. I have thus decided not to implement him in the typology. I have chosen to refer to him in the thesis nevertheless, because I think he is a good example of how people can view technology from different stands. He will be referred to as George.

Sociopod is 21 years old and from the United States. He is studying in San Francisco, where the head quarter of Apple is seated. He got his iPod four years ago. As I see it, his main reasons for getting and using iPod are social. He did not have a personal stereo before, and he still does not use his iPod to great extent. It functions as glue among his friends, as they are swapping (exchanging) music files with each other on an almost

daily basis. It is important to him how his friends react to what content he has on his iPod.

Musicpod is 30 years old, living in Oslo, Norway. She is a child welfare officer, and got her first iPod this year. For her the main reason for having an iPod is to listen to music when she is not at home. The fact that she is married to a *technopod* is part of the reason why she has an iPod instead of another mp3 player. They decided to buy it together, and she had never heard of it before he introduced it to her when they were travelling in the United States. She is used to having a personal stereo, and like to listen to music a lot. She is also a choir singer, so music is a passionate hobby for her.

The person I will refer to as *Technopod* is 30 years old, living in Oslo, Norway. He has technology both as work and hobby. He is educated as a civil engineer within product design and works as an interaction designer. He refers to himself as a *technology lover*, and the fact that iPod is a technological gadget made by Apple is the reason why he bought it. He wanted to support Apple's design profile through buying their product. He also had a personal reason for buying iPod: When he was a product design student, he made a model quite similar to iPod (a few years before the first iPod was launched). Thus, he felt it as an acknowledgment of his own ability to foresee development when he saw this gadget.

The fourth informant – George – stands out from the other users, as he is trying to scale down technology's impact on his and others' life. He is working with technology solutions and programming, and is educated within informatics. He wants technology to be perfect in the sense that he does not have to use much extra time on it. His main purpose with having an iPod is to listen to music when he is away from home. He is the

only one of my informants who explicitly complains on some aspects of the iPod. According to him it is not possible to organize the music on iPod in a satisfactory way, and this leads to him spending too much time to find the correct song. One reason that he can be critical towards these aspects is that he has knowledge which helps him see potential solutions.

It is clear that the four users have different approaches to iPod. In addition to this, there could be another characteristic, *Designpod*. Since all four informants seemed to be concerned with the design aspect of iPod, I have chosen not to make a distinguished stereotype of this user. The design aspect will anyway be quite much taken into account in my thesis. The aspects of technology and music are given through the fact that iPod is a technological tool with which you can listen to music. All users will have to relate to these aspects of the object. The social aspects interlinked with iPod are on the other hand not given, but follows from the different ways of using and relating to it.

Extracts from the interviews will be interwoven throughout the whole thesis. To have performed four interviews does not make my findings representative to any population. I believe, though, that my findings can work as an example of a tendency among users of iPod.

2.5 Changing Context

When Sony presented Walkman in the early 80s, this new technology represented a change in how people view and act in public spaces. With this ability to listen to music wherever and whenever you wanted to, it is possible to choose not to interact with people or the context you are surrounded by. (Bull, 2000).

Michael Bull has through his empirical work, presented in *Sounding Out the City* (2000), discovered that there are several reasons for using a personal stereo in everyday life. He presents different users and their personal reasons for listening to music. People will always have reasons for why they use personal stereos, and hence legitimate their actions, but the reasons can vary in as many shapes as there are users. Nevertheless, he manages to create a typology of the different users he discovered. Some of the users explain how the use of a personal stereo helps them to *control* the environment that surrounds them. This means that instead of focusing on what goes on where they physically happen to be, they choose to give a different perspective to the moment, gained through listening to personally chosen music. This music can help them to maintain a specific mood, through the emotions in connotation to it.

For regular users the idea that they might go outside without music is often described as distressing, as is the failure of the personal stereo to function correctly in use. Other users may decide not to use it on a particular journey but nevertheless prefer to have it with them 'just in case'. The 'just in case' also extends to having spare tapes to cover the possibility of mood changes, thereby minimizing the possibility of mood changes, thereby to have the correct music invariably makes the personal stereo dysfunctional, leading users to switch their machines off as a preferable alternative to listening to 'incorrect music'. Incorrect is defined in terms of the sounds not matching either the mood of the user, or their surroundings (Bull, 2000, pp. 19-20).

The possibility of controlling mood changes with an mp3 player that has high storage capacity. It becomes possible to carry your whole music collection with you, and in that way the music associated with different moods will be in your pocket.

When wearing a personal stereo you choose to listen to music, instead of listening to the sounds in the street. You lock out the sounds of traffic, people talking in the streets, music from shops – and you are in your own, self made context. The context you are in is

the context you have chosen, according to what music you prefer to play. What music you will play, will vary with your mood – and more, what mood you would like to be in. With the old, existing Walkman you could have one single cassette in your stereo at any time. Maybe you brought more cassettes in your bag or in your car, while listening to the one you had in your Walkman right now. If you were planning to use your Walkman a lot during the day, you had to decide in the morning what you would like to listen to. This has changed with the mp3 players. When you are at home, you can transfer plenty of cd's into your player, and then transfer them further to the mp3 player which you later can carry with you. Then – if your mood changes and you want to listen to some other music – it is there, with you, in your pocket. All you have to do is use the tool panel and switch songs.

The technological format of the mp3 players makes it easy for the users to exchange files between one another. The mp3 format of music came before the portable mp3 players, and was then used on computers. With this format a large activity grew among users and various programs for sharing music which was accessible through the Internet. Downloading music from the Internet without paying the producer or the artist is not legal, and music production companies have tried to stop this activity. “In the technological terms, these developments represent a change in the very architecture of the Internet and a progressive decentralization of control. In the move from the ‘content at the center’ to the ‘content at the edges’, music files can be stored on and distributed from any computer in the world” (Garofalo, R, 2004, p. 89). To be able to store large quantities of mp3 files on a computer, you need to have quite much storage capacity, so old machines will not be able to do such operations.

2.6 Using Technology in Everyday Life

Technopod might be a good example of how some people, men in particular, tend to combine the fascination for technological gadgets through both work and pleasure (Kleif & Faulkner, 2003).

If *Technopod* can be seen as typical for men loving technology, *Musicpod* can be seen as stereotypical of women's relation to technology, something quite opposite. She told me that she would brag to all her male friends that she had acquired an iPod, and took for granted that her female friends had never even heard of it. She also stated that if she had not been married to a guy interested in technology, she would never have heard of it herself. Even if she bought an iPod, it was still her husband that took the technological challenges interlinked with the use. Nevertheless, she was quite proud of owning an iPod and used it frequently as a tool for listening to music.

Different technologies have different scripts for how they are supposed to be used. Their function and shape opens for particular understanding and use – but this script does not take into account contextual differences. Madeleine Akrich writes about the term *de- scription* – referring to how different technologies are actually used and interpreted in different contexts. This can be totally different from an engineer's actual intention of how it was to be used (Akrich, 1992). The iPod can be seen as successful in the sense that it is mostly used in the way described and assumed by the designer. It is still used in several ways – as a jukebox in bars and at parties, as pleasure equipment for joggers and drivers, as a cd player (an accessory allows it to play music through an FM radio), as a recorder, as a tool for showing off, as a symbolic gadget, as a storage place for different files, as a tool for discussion on design issues.

Cultural taste and individuality can be shown to a large degree through what kind of music you listen to, and up till now it has not been a hobby too interlinked with consumption (Blindheim et al. 2004, pp. 88-89). This seems to change with this new mp3 player. Or, the creators of mp3 players have grasped that it is possible to create a technology, a product, an object that can fit in people's efforts to show their identity through their use of objects. Taste and identity can be shown through what design you buy.

Being a product designer with a particular interest in technology, the design profile was of particular interest to *Technopod*. When I asked him what he took into account before buying new objects, he answered:

Quality. That I do understand the designer's thought, that I can recognize myself in the product. Since I have background as a product designer, I will build my own identity into the things I am drawing – and in that sense I can also see the person behind a product. For example if it is jewellery, I can see the person behind and tell if that person speaks the same language as me. Or, if I buy a tent, then... According to my definition of quality – if I buy a tent, I know that the person has to know more about tenting than I do. Since I am not tenting a lot, I have to be persuaded through the design and moulding that the person knows more than me (*Technopod*).

iPod is not the only mp3 player with special design, but since Apple has worked with design as their main project in so many years, they are ahead of the other producers?

Today it is not enough with the technology itself, to sell new products it also has to have a good design. This can be seen as interlinked with a general increasing focus on design in different kinds of objects used in everyday life (Dokk Holm, 2004).

3 iPod as a Branded Lifestyle

3.1 The marketing of iPod

According to Naomi Klein, the author of the book *No Logo*, it is of increasing importance for a corporation to be successful that they manage to create a *brand*, rather than a mere product. A brand can be defined as a product where the symbolic meaning of the product is of greater importance than its functional aspects. When people buy a special brand, they are concerned with the symbolic effects derived from using the object. How a specific brand is interpreted, both by users and others, very much depends on how the product is presented through marketing. According to semiotics, all objects are signs, and all products will be interpreted to some extent. The interesting point is how will the products be interpreted, and why? What is special with branded products compared to others? According to Klein, the fact that some producers focus their expenditures in marketing, is one reason for why and how they are able to create a particular connotation to their product (Klein, 2000).

As written in chapter two, the people I write about in my thesis are living in a consumption society and already have their basic needs fulfilled. They need an additional reason for buying a product. When basic needs are fulfilled, people strive for having more artificial needs satisfied – the need for being seen, gaining respect from others, being important in the eyes of others and your self – in short; to maintain a social role. Not any social role, but a role that is followed by high status in the society. This can be gained through a particular lifestyle, and this is what producers of diverse brands are trying to offer through marketing their product.

Nike is a typical example of a successful brand. The company sells expensive shoes, where one pays mostly for wearing this particular brand, and for the lifestyle they are offering. It is impossible and not my intention to generalise all users of Nike, but as I am writing about the consuming aspects I am focusing on the more symbolic reasons presented for buying and using Nike shoes. As other brands, Nike is linked to a specific logo and a slogan that appears on their products and advertisement. Special for brands, compared to other products, is the connotation that follows. Anything in the world is possible, *if you buy and wear Nike shoes* (as reflected in their slogan “just do it”). During the last years, besides being famous for making shoes, Nike has also become well known for their way of doing business. The corporation does not own the factories making their shoes – on their pay roll are mainly people working with marketing and design. When you buy Nike shoes, you are paying for the marketing, and for being able to “just do it”, because you wear this particular shoe – with the Nike swoosh on it (Klein, 2000, pp. 15-19).

When viewing the webpage presented earlier (<http://www.ipodlounge.com>) on June 11th, 2004 I found a small video commercial (http://www.ipodlounge.com/members/profile_view_all.php). This ad shows different people in different colours (orange, blue, green and red), all wearing the iPod in different ways. It shows a man dressed in orange that is running. The iPod is stuck to his upper arm in a band. A lady in green is wearing the iPod as a necklace, a woman dressed in blue has fastened the iPod in her belt, and a man in red is holding it in his hand like normal. The text that follows the video is “Where do you wear your iPod?” It opens up for personal interpretation of how to use this gadget. The ad is for a company selling

spin-off products from iPod. The company is called Marware, and when I entered their webpage through mouse clicking the advertisement video, I discovered that they sell among other things Apple products. In addition to this advertisement, I saw on the same webpage many other examples of accessories that can be used together with iPod. Another text linked to the iPod spin-off products is “the solution for all your iPod protection needs”. The marketing of these accessories can be seen as a way to make people personalise the use of this object, to fulfill their *needs*. It serves as an example of how the product iPod has been successful not only for Apple itself, but that it has had a spin-off effect on other companies as well.

Sociopod had bought a radio transmitter in addition to his iPod, being sold by Apple. This transmitter makes it possible to listen to his iPod through his home stereo. Neither he nor his friends had many accessories, and it was important for him to point out that for him it was an active stand not to approve it.

For me that seems kind of silly, that they have so many objects. A lot of them seem, like to have cases, there are carrying cases, but they seem useless. I guess they are just trying to make more money by sort of selling as many things as they can, I guess. Well, yeah, I do see people buy them, definitely. I just don't, because I think I don't need it. It works, I think, I just think it's stupid. And actually I get a reaction, I sort of look down on the people using it (*Sociopod*).

The use of particular objects can be seen as having a symbolic effect to the user and his/her surroundings. This is especially the case with *branded* products, since it is not the functional parts of the product that are important, but the symbolic effect it has to use this product. Hence – the connotation of the product; what do you symbolize to other people by showing them the brand of e.g. your shoes? That you have the money to buy expensive shoes.. That you like their slogan, and, that you approve their design.

“Baudrillard suggests that it is through the operation of a symbolic code or the logic of signs that commodities are given meaning. The phenomenon of branding in advertising, whereby an aura of associations is attached to a product – for instance, sexuality to Levi jeans, rugged masculinity to Marlboro cigarettes, and a ‘hip’ lifestyle to raisins, is identified as an important site of the operation of this code. The meaning of goods created in a brand is understood by Baudrillard to be separate from the social relations of both production and consumption: it is not to be understood in relation to their intrinsic qualities or use, but neither is it to be understood in terms of their economic exchange. Rather, their meaning arises from their position in a continuing process of signification and resignification”. (Lury, 1996, p. 69).

In the following part, I will argue that iPod already has become a brand by showing what kind of advertisement they use, the fact that it is very popular, that it is expensive, and that it is easy recognizable.

Beside the various advertisements for iPod that I will present later, what is maybe more important in the marketing of this mp3 player is that it has been successful in creating a brand. An aspect that supports my assumption is that when presenting iPod in advertisement, they do not explain what an mp3 player is in general or the iPod in particular. It is taken for granted that you already know this. The fact that the iPod has been shown in several fashion magazines as a stylish product shows how important the design has been in the process of marketing the product. This can also be seen as advertising – even if Apple does not have to pay for this.

3.2 The Advertising iPod

As I in my thesis am concerned with the people using iPod, and being curious about it as phenomenon, I have, as stated in the introduction, chosen to analyse the advertisements as signs that give meaning to people in their daily life. To what extent people have an

active stance towards commercials like this, I will not comment further, but I assume in my analysis that people always act on signs and information being present in their life.

It makes a difference whether people actively seek a commercial or the commercial is presented randomly in their daily context. The following example is an advertisement I discovered when actively looking for it, as I entered Apple's webpage for that purpose. This ad shows itself in various ways, though. It appears as a commercial on television – so, by watching television you “accept” the commercials being presented, you have in a way *chosen* to view the commercial. Otherwise when the commercial is presented as a poster on a wall, you are passing it in your daily walk to job or some other place. The poster affects you, steals your attention. You can not control the fact that it is present on your walk, but you can choose not to give it more attention, and hence not interpret it further.

The existing commercials for iPod can be explained as a variation on the same theme, an analogy to one melody played on different instruments. The melody remains the same, but its expression will be different depending on the instrument presenting it. The different instruments in the advertisement for iPod are among others; post cards, large billboards hanging in the streets, posters on walls and video commercials. All are showing neon colour background, a person in black silhouette, wearing the iPod that is all white. There is no text explaining what an iPod is – it is expected that you already know that it is an mp3 player, with ability to store music files. There are sometimes text written in addition, but the text is not explaining more than e.g. “for Windows and Mac”. The picture below is one example of the commercial, copied from the homepage of Apple presenting iPod (www.apple.com/ipod) on May 16, 2004.



The picture shows a girl holding an iPod, wearing the white ear buds. The first thing that draws my attention to the picture is the way the girl is standing. Instead of standing in a natural way, she *poses*, like a model showing her special clothing. Is she actually *wearing* the iPod? Like an accessory to her stylish clothes? She is a model – showing iPod. When watching the advertisement videos that I will present later, I understand that the woman is not only posing, she is also dancing. It can thus be seen as a still picture of a woman listening to music and dancing. This aspect of the advertisement will be further explained when the video's are presented and analysed.

In all times, the symbolic effect of the products people use has been important. This is especially seen as important when it comes to the use of luxury goods, in this case exemplified by iPod. As I see the symbolic use of iPod as *wearing* a technological tool, rather than using it for its mere functional purposes, it can be seen as analogous to wearing specific clothes for symbolic reasons. “The fact that clothing has symbolic significance means that the human need for clothing only exists within a concrete cultural setting. Certainly in Western culture the most frequent symbolic use of clothing has been to maintain social status and social differences” (Berry, 1994, pp. 29-30). To wear

particular clothes and accessories can be seen as a way of expression, a method to draw attention towards oneself (or the opposite; trying to be less visible).

The device iPod shows itself in the ad by being white, in opposition to the background of the commercial being pink and the person being in black. The fact that the people in the advertisements are always appearing as silhouettes creates a feeling of impersonality. It could have been anyone; the person is in a way anonymous, besides from wearing this iPod. It is easier to see the iPod because of this, contrasting colours being an important effect. As explained, the picture has little text, and the text does not explain thoroughly what kind of technology or commodity the iPod is. But – it says something about the storage ability, and that it is small – “10000 songs in your pocket”, meaning that it is so small that it can fit into your pocket. The fact that the commercial does not explain that it is an mp3 player, shows that is assumed that the people viewing the ad already knows what it is. Hence, the fact that it is recognizable is also an important effect. You have to know to some extent what an iPod is, to understand the commercial.

When discussing my topic with a teacher in my specialization, he told me about having seen a large billboard with this commercial somewhere in the US. He had noticed that there was no text on the commercial, and he interpreted the iPod as being a “jewellery” of the person wearing it in the commercial. It looked to him like the persons in the commercials were wearing the iPod as an accessory, making them look better. This is also how the iPod is shown, as I see it, in the various commercials. In the video there are different people dancing, having fun and living an easy life, while they are all wearing the iPod – as an accessory. This is interesting from a certain perspective,

analysing people's needs. Do they need the iPod? Is it really making people happier, as shown in the commercials?

The video commercials for iPod show people in silhouettes like presented above. They are shown one by one, dancing solo, while they are listening to music through an iPod.

When I showed one of these video commercials to *Musicpod*, her comments were mainly concerned with the aesthetical parts of the iPod – and the video itself. An aspect about the iPod that the video commercials are showing is the fact that as compared to the usage of a portable cd player, a Discman, you will not have to worry about the music stopping; because you are jumping or dancing (a cd being played will be disturbed by movements). She noticed this aspect as something positive with the iPod when I showed her the video advertisement. “I am also thinking –I could never have done that with my Discman, jumped around like that” (*Musicpod*).

The advertisements claim that using this particular gadget will affect your life – the connotations of the *brand* iPod. These connotations are among others that your everyday life becomes easy, with aspects such as freedom and pleasure. The fact that the persons in the advertisements are dancing alone shows that they are independent people, having an easy life because they are listening to music through iPod. As a matter of fact, they are not doing anything other than listening to music and dancing. But – it is not enough to listen to music; it is shown that this effect is gained through listening to music *through iPod*. The symbolic effect of this is that life is normal without the iPod – and important aspects change while using it.

(http://www.apple.com/ipod/ads/wild_postings/wildpostingslarge.html) One important

aspect the advertisement plays on is the aspect of mood, having a sense of being independent and coping with life in an easygoing manner. The person in the advertisement is alone, but is nevertheless shown as an active and social person. This is an important effect, as the social aspects of buying a product can be seen as more important than ever.

The strategic value of advertising – and also its trick – is precisely this: that it targets everyone *in their relation to others*, in their hankerings after reified social prestige. It is never addressed to a lone individual, but is aimed at human beings in their differential relations and, even when it seems to tap into their ‘deep’ motivations, it always does so in *spectacular* fashion. That is to say, it always calls in their friends and relations, the group, and society, all hierarchically ordered within the process of reading and interpretation, the process of ‘setting off’ or ‘showing-off’ (*faire-valoir*) which it sets in train (Baudrillard, 1998, p. 64).

Baudrillard here claims that the social setting in which an advertisement is to be understood is of great importance. It is therefore interesting to see how the advertisements show people that act alone. Even if they act on their own, they all dress within a special social norm, all can be said to represent “hip and cool” youngsters. Even if the persons being presented appear quite anonymous, being in black – not showing their faces, the fact that they all appear quite fancy and stylish, symbolizes that they are members of certain social groupings. They seem to be full of self esteem, and no one can be this by themselves. This is something gained through a social setting. The video ads show persons dancing. Even if dancing alone, dancing can be seen as a social activity, an activity that reflects a happy person. Since the persons are acting alone, though, I see them as social individuals. They are also expressing their social identity through the use of this particular object, iPod, something that is also affecting their way of behaving. Is it

the fact that they have social status from before that makes them buy and use iPod, or is it the other way around; because they buy and use iPod they become more expressive and happy as social beings?

It is clear that the people in the advertisement are “showing off” the fact that they *wear* iPod, to use the term from Baudrillard. To be able to “show off” a gadget, it is necessary that the device is seen as popular, it symbolises a certain degree of social status to wear it. So – who decide that the social status follows from wearing and using iPod? The marketing from Apple has already decided this, by showing it in the advertisement. They present a “fact” – the persons in the commercials are successful and happy – and hence, so will you be if you do the same. The mediators implement the frame in which the advertisement is to be understood. I will describe another example of the advertisement existing for iPod – a video that is slightly different from the others. This video shows a normal guy walking in the streets, listening to iPod. This we can tell from the fact that he is wearing white ear buds. He looks quite happy, and as he passes a wall covered with various posters looking like the example above. All the persons in silhouettes at these posters, starts to dance. He notices that something is odd, turns off his iPod, and the posters look like ordinary posters, with people on it. When he turns the music back on, the people start to dance again. When he has passed the wall with posters, the posters gets back to normal. As I interpret this video, it seems like the fact that he is listening to music through an iPod changes the context he is in. It gets livelier, and easier – and this is because of the iPod. It makes a difference.

For a product to be successful in contemporary consumption society, advertisement as a tool is not enough – the advertisement will only serve as a part of a

more complex system; the creation of the *brand*. “Think of the brand as the core meaning of the modern corporation, and of the advertisement as one vehicle used to convey that meaning to the world” (Klein, 2000, p. 5).

The persons attending discussed the difference between two different mp3 players, namely *Zen* and *iPod*. The following cite shows some parts of a discussion on whether the iPod is a object for ‘showing off’ or not:

Cyclone

iPod = Great storage, ridiculous price, excellent size, get to be 'cool'

Zen = Excellent storage, far better price, not so good size, get to be serious and just want to listen to music, not be a fashion groupie.

gamezfreak

"Not a porno!"

It's like the console fanboy thing, but for mp3 players.

"fashion groupie"

rolls eyes

Cyclone

Hardly, it's just Ipods are more fashion statements than actual gadgets for most people.

I.e, they're featured in 'Style Guides' and such like. Nowt wrong with them, or people who use them, except when people buy them for fashion reasons. That's just lame.

Whereas the Zen, it's so much more chunky, nobody could ever do the same! :)

(http://ukchatforums.reserve.co.uk/display_messages.php?threadid=96500&forumid=301)

The quotation presented above is just one of many examples of people being concerned with the connotations linked to iPod. The huge activity concerning the topic, both in various Internet pages and else where it is a topic, is an example of how iPod has been a successful product.

3.3 The Race of Consumption

Bauman writes in his book *Liquid Modernity* about the striving for fulfilling desires through consumer behaviour. He is comparing the race of consuming with running the London marathon. An important difference between the two phenomena is that the marathon has a finite end. “To reach the elusive and ever receding promise of a trouble-free life – never ends once it is started: I've started, but I may not finish....Desire becomes its own purpose, and the sole uncontested and unquestionable purpose” (Bauman, 2000, pp. 72-73). In marathons there are some persons hired to run only a shorter part of the whole competition, but this part they will run the fastest they can. Then they quit, after getting the real participators up and running. The analogy here is that companies marketing a product hand out free product samples to people who are seen as lead users. It is a well known marketing strategy to use famous role models in commercials for products, especially if this person stands for something that the company wants to be seen as interlinked with (Klein, 2000, pp. 74-76). One example of free marketing of iPod is seen in how it appears in music videos, especially in the USA. *Sociopod* noticed this fact, and reflected upon it in this way: “It’s not like a focus or anything, it’s just that, maybe it is cool or something. So people think that if they put it in there, they’ll get recognition, or maybe sell more” (*Sociopod*). The persons using e.g. iPod in this way are people considered as target users by the marketing group in a company.

When companies market products by making popular people use them – it is not the product itself that is being marketed and shown, but rather the *brand*. There are many examples of brands today. In *No Logo* (2001). Naomi Klein describes the phenomenon of

branding thoroughly. She explains how the brand is more in focus than the mere product; this meaning what connotations follows an object. An object like iPod has one specific meaning – that being its denotations, or the *script* of the object as Akrich would call it (Akrich, 1992). Beside its basic functions, it has also more symbolic meanings. By using iPod you send signals to others about what? That you have lots of money, that you care about design, that you are “addicted” to music, that you are an Apple fan – and that you want the lifestyle presented by Apple through its advertisement? Since the look and user interface seems so important when presenting it through advertisements, I believe that it is and becomes also important for the users.

As written earlier, the producer Apple is known for the way they design the technology they present. This explains why the design of iPod is rather important compared to other mp3 players. It is seen as more than just a tool – it is also seen as an important accessory, as I wrote above, an accessory in almost the same sense as special clothing. The iPod is something you *wear*. Another supporting argument are the white ear buds. Apple was the first producer to have white instead of black headphone ear buds. The ear buds can be seen as an extension of the mp3 player itself, the arms of the iPod – iPod being the body. It is presented as a whole, instead of to separate technologies (iPod and its ear buds).

The fact that the product iPod is successful, also from a marketing perspective, is shown through an article presented in *The Economist* in the 12 – 18 June, 2004 issue. This article supports my theory about iPod being a fashionable technological tool, also used for its specific design. “On the streets and underground trains of New York, San Francisco and London, iPod users (identifiable by the device’s characteristic white

headphone leads) are ubiquitous. Fashion houses make iPod cases; pop stars wear iPod in their videos. The iPod is a hit”.

(http://www.economist.com/science/tq/displayStory.cfm?story_id=2724432). In addition to showing that the iPod is successful in creating a brand, the article also shows how Apple have been successful in meeting users’ needs – in particular the growing demand for larger storage capacity. In this article, a graph is presented showing how Apple leads the market, selling more mp3 players than other big producers – being the first to introduce a portable stereo with this large storage capacity.

Why is this? When you *wear* the iPod in the street, it is possible for others to see that you don’t just have any old mp3 player – you have *the* iPod. The white ear buds are for iPod and Apple the same as the swoosh on every shoe sold by Nike. This swoosh shows the rest of the world that the shoes are of a special quality, quite expensive, and if you use them – you are a Nike fan, choosing to wear the image provided by them. If you wear the white ear buds of iPod, you accept this brand and “way of life” that is offered by Apple. When you use iPod in public spaces, you are in this way also advertising for the brand. The focus on the symbolic effect of products being important for the sale can be explained through a conscious turn in marketing:

Through the 1990s big, successful brands became less interlinked with production. The brands became symbols of lifestyle and image – associative links to something diffuse, above sneakers and sweaters. The market coordinators were themselves explicit on the fact that the products became less important, the brand was to be a symbol in itself. Hence, the brands break away from the products’ qualities and production (my translation, Blindheim et al., 2004 p. 126).

That iPod is visible and easy to recognize was something my informants found interesting. *Sociopod* explains how the look of iPod differentiates it from other objects. “I think it establishes this product as different, I guess, from the other ones. I mean, you can definitely... it’s pretty obvious. When you do see someone listening, you can see that it is an iPod, and I think that helps the marketing, that you can identify it so easily.” (*Sociopod*).

Musicpod also points out the fact that it is easy recognizable, even though she is not totally convinced about its look. “For sure it stands out. Oh, yeah, that one is white, then it’s an iPod. You can see that it stands out. It does. But I don’t think it is 100 % good looking.” (*Musicpod*). You are a part of the marketing by using it – by showing the white ear buds to the rest of the community. One can argue that this is not the case, since most people wouldn’t even know what an iPod is. This doesn’t matter for Apple. They are not interested in all people. Their advertisements are showing young, “hip” people dancing – being free of all obligations, having a time off. Hence it is natural to assume that these people are their lead target group. Young people, as they see it, want to use their time to listen to music, wherever.

Even if my focus in this thesis is how the iPod is a fashion gadget, besides its functional qualities of being a personal stereo, I have recognized that other mp3 players also can be seen as having this function. One particular mp3 player can serve as an example of how the use of a technological gadget is shown to other people, but this can also be seen as a tendency linked to mobile, technical devices in general. Some people use their technical devices as jewellery, hanging their mobile phone or mp3 player around their neck as a necklace. In the urban street, it has become increasingly popular to *wear*

technical devices. One reason to have your phone or mp3 player around your neck, hanging in a *necklace-look-alike*, can be that it is easy accessible. If somebody calls you on the phone, or you want to change the song you are listening to immediately, it is easy. But my assumption is that beside these functional aspects, the symbolic effect of showing off your technical devices to others is of increasing importance. You signal to other people that you have limited time – and that you don't mind changing the present situation you are in. It shows that you have the ability to be spontaneous and act on interruptions in your life (Blichfeldt, 2002).

To buy an iPod, that is one of the products from Apple, can be seen as a single action. But there are also another possibility – for you to become a devoted Apple consumer. After having bought this iPod, there are plenty of accessories that can be bought in addition. Apple's web site even contains a link if you are interested in these various devices, such as iPod-bags and a transmitter enabling you to play music through a radio channel. (<http://www.apple.com/ipod/accessories.html>).

iPod can become a personal object, in the sense that you can buy accessories that are additional objects – not needed for listening to music, but created for the special way you want to use it. If you want to go snowboarding while listening to music from your iPod, it is possible. If you want to buy a special bag to carry it in, it exists. Is it because the design is so simple in itself, that one can add ones personal style to it? It is white, has a clean surface – and few tools linked to it. It has potential – and different producers exploit this situation. In this way, users can make it a personalized object. It is already personal in the way that it contains your individual list of songs, but in addition you can

buy additional “stuff” like speakers and jackets

(<http://www.wired.com/news/mac/0,2125,63215,00.html>)

After having a huge market success like iPod has been for Apple, they are now trying to take advantage of their own success to sell more products. When they launched their new computer called iMac in August /September 2004, they were using the fact that it is made by the same company that produced iPod for what it is worth. The commercial I am basing my assumptions on, is a video I found at Apple’s home page. The main text in the video is: “From the creators of iPod – the new iMac G5”

(<http://www.apple.com/imac/video/>). Since it is still quite new, while I am writing my thesis, I am not sure how they will continue to market this machine. When I first heard of this, it was because *Technopod* told me about it during the interview. When I asked him whether he had seen any websites discussing iPod or not, he told me that he had, since he was checking sites like this every day. He said that he never participated in the discussions himself, but that he read the comments of others. Among the websites he regularly checked was the homepage of Apple (<http://www.apple.com>). He explains in the quote below how he is checking different websites, and how he found out about the new iMac. He also explains how he was fascinated by the fact that they use the iPod success as a marketing trick.

One thing is the iPod. The other thing is that after I got a Mac, I turned into a heavy Mac fan. This means that I am “browsing” the different websites concerned with this. So I have turned into a Mac nerd. I am visiting Slashdot. The register. Mozillalane.org. But I am only reading, I am not discussing with others. And I only read articles. And news about products. And I notice those people that are arguing with each other on ‘whether Apple is best or not’, or ‘if Steve Jobs is ill’. I check on it every workday. News do not arrive every day, but maybe some every week. But, when they launched the new iMac I actually knew what it contained, so then I bought it.... maybe 6 hours after it was

released or something. They are using iPod in the commercial – ‘Apple, the creator of iPod’. They are trying to push Mac’s as big iPod’s. (*Technopod*).

Apple have made iPod quite visible in various urban contexts through large marketing campaigns. When I was in Paris one weekend in June 2004, there happened to be a huge marketing for iPod at the same time. When I arrived Paris from Strasbourg, I noticed that the whole city was bombarded with advertisement posters for iPod. In addition to posters quite visible in the urban context, I noticed magazines lying around at metro stations, with the easily recognizable iPod advertisement on the front of it. The paper was a special edition of the free magazine *Anous Paris*, announcing what was happening in Paris during the annual music festival in France; *Fête de la Musique*. This magazine is handed out among other places at the metro stations in Paris. Watching it closer, I noticed that an advertisement picture presenting iPod followed every page also presenting the music festival. The pictures were the same as the stereotypical picture presented in the example above. One difference was that in this edition all text was removed from the pictures. Neither the word iPod nor Apple was mentioned. On the back of the magazine, though, there was another advertisement for iPod, one that I had not seen before. It was picturing an iPod with its white ear buds on a pink background. The text that followed the picture was “iTunes Music Store (...)”, meaning that the advertisement was actually for iTunes, the software program, and not the iPod that was pictured. The fact that iPod can be used together with iTunes was not mentioned in the ad.

I assumed that Apple was sponsoring this festival, and this assumption was supported on the day of the festival. Related to any music stage I noticed that evening, I saw posters presenting iPod. I have later realized that this large marketing of iPod in Paris

was around the same time that iTunes was launched in France, Germany and UK (<http://www.stargeek.com/item/14562.html>). During the same weekend, I noticed large iPod posters on the train station in Paris, Gare de l'est. There were 25 posters being in 4 x 6 meters size. All were hanging down from the roof, the picture being the characteristic neon colours with people in black silhouettes wearing iPod. Knowing that I was biased in my observation of the advertisements, because of studying the phenomenon, I asked a man on the train station café to give me a spontaneous interpretation. I told him that I was writing on this thesis, and therefore was curious on how he perceived this “boosting” of iPod posters within the small train station area. He had not noticed the marketing before I started talking to him. He started to describe the posters for me, and he obviously did not know what an iPod was from before. At first, he told me that it was an advertisement for cell phones. Then he changed his mind, and told me that it was presenting a personal-stereo. It was not too easy for him to understand what the advertisement was presenting when he did not have any background information regarding iPod or Apple. This supports my assumption on Apple presenting iPod as a brand. They do not want to explain the gadget further, and hence they are addressing the advertisements to those who already have knowledge, or the ones who get fascinated enough to find out on their own. I was fascinated by the fact that he had not noticed the large posters, since they to me were quite visible. One explanation of this is that you are all the time presented with much information, especially in an urban context. Different advertisements are trying to steal your attention all the time – this launching being no exception. In trying to keep the focus of ones own life, thoughts and concentration, you have to filter the impressions all the time being presented to you. “The amount of information that can be attended to at

any given time is limited. Therefore, if the amount of information available at any given time exceeds capacity, an attentional filter is used to let some information through and block the rest” (Galotti, 1999, p. 91).

The example presented above shows an enormous marketing campaign in Paris. While being in Oslo, I have not noticed any advertisements presenting iPod. Not presented by Apple, that is. This does not mean that iPod has not been visible in the urban context or in the media. Actually, quite the opposite has been the case. The weeks before and during the launching of iPod mini in Norway, all large newspapers were covering this “event” to a large extent. They were written with more or less analytical distance. Some were comparing this new mp3 player to existing products, others were written on how this gadget was ‘needed to be cool and hip in the urban jungle’. One example of the latter was an article written in one of the largest daily newspapers in Norway, Dagbladet. Five random persons in the street were presented with the mini iPod’s in the various colours, and asked which one they would have bought. In the article, the persons were pictured next to the version of iPod Mini they had chosen. One of the persons explained his choice with “I would have bought it in silver, since everything I own of electronic is in silver” (Bryne, S., Idsø, Ø., 2004). The example presented above shows how a producer can achieve free marketing when they have been successful in creating a brand.

4 Social Consequences of Consumption

I am particularly interested in how people create their meaning and identity in a culture where consumption is embedded in everyday life. Even if one takes an active stand against being part of the consumption carousel it is difficult, if not impossible, to live in a country like Norway without relating to the commodities surrounding us. I will in the forthcoming text try to understand how meaning can be achieved through the use of objects – when commodities are important in the creation of meaning in everyday life.

The word *consumption* refers to the use of a certain amount of objects, and is often related to the description of materialistic aspects of a society, where people exchange their objects into new objects that are more appreciated, but not necessarily needed. The members of such a society are recognized by a great focus on owning and using certain commodities, and not joining this carousel of capitalism is almost impossible.

Consumption societies are recognized by *consumerism*; “the state of advanced industrial society in which a lot of goods are bought and sold”

(<http://dictionary.cambridge.org/define.asp?key=16552&dict=CALD>).

What describes a society recognized with consumer culture is not necessarily that the majority of the people have the ability to buy the available products, but rather that they wish to have this opportunity.

The dominance of a culture in a society does not require all that society's members to be able to participate in that culture on the same terms. Indeed, a culture may be dominant even if most people can only aspire to participate in it: its dominance is felt to the extent that people's aspirations, their hopes and fears, vocabulary of motives and sense of self are defined in its terms. All these points suggest that while it is important to recognize that the terms of participation in consumer culture are profoundly unequal, these terms are not directly tied (although they may be indirectly related) to economic inequality, but are peculiar to the culture itself (Lury, 1996, p. 7).

Within the consumption culture, I am concerned with how large cultural phenomena can evolve because of one single product and how it has been marketed. In my case it is this particular technological device that both users and public life are relating to on a large scale. It is also interesting to see how this phenomenon has global aspects, because of an intensive overall marketing of the same product in the same way. The advertisement and commercials for the product iPod are very much the same in every country, even though the money put into marketing varies very much from country to country.

4. 1. The need to belong

Social identity can be explained as the way we present and understand our selves in relation to other people. In the same way that you need to organize the world around you, for it to give meaning, you also have to organize how you view your self – as opposed to others and surroundings. Even if identity is unstable as such, there are degrees of stableness. This can be presented as containing two aspects; social status and social role. The biographical facts are somewhat given (how old you are, where you come from, whether you are male or female and etc) while the more dynamic aspects (where you live, what kind of work you have, what your hobbies are and how you like to dress) are changeable, more complex aspects. The latter can be explained as how you define and show your self through appearance (behaviour and looks). Through how you look, you send signals concerning what kind of social network and groupings you belong to. Even more important are what signals you send about what groups you *do not* identify with. For instance, people send signals about how they define themselves through the way they

dress. Identity can thus be seen as part of a *we*, and the comparison and identification with other members of this community. Even though it is a trend today to search for individualisation, there are many examples of the opposite. The way people follow fashion is one example of the paradox between conformity and individualisation (Dokk Holm, 2004, pp. 132-133).

People will strive to change the fluid aspects into something that correlates with their view of themselves and, maybe even more important, how you want to be interpreted by others. It is important for people to legitimate their actions as correlating to how they perceive themselves (Blichfeldt, 2003). Whether a music lover or a technical geek, owning and wearing an iPod can be an important step in the right direction. This finding is also supported by the *Cognitive dissonance theory* by Festinger, explaining how people will change their actions or attitudes to maintain a feeling of being stable. “There is a drive toward cognitive consistency; two cognitions that are inconsistent will produce discomfort, which will motivate the person to remove the inconsistency and bring the cognitions into harmony” (Atkinson, 2000, p. 626).

If one claims that society is fluid, as presented by Bauman among others (Bauman, 2000), it is self evident that something will have to remain stable. A feeling of shared values and belonging to a community can, as I will show by my empirical findings, be seen as important in this sense. Social identity can be understood as a symbol for what culture you represent, and more – what you do not represent. How you view yourself as belonging to a specific group of people, with particular marks. Identity can in this sense be explained as something people share, a feeling of community gained through a minimal set of shared values. “Identity relates to the understandings people

hold about who they are and what is meaningful to them. These understandings are formed in relation to certain attributes that hold priority over other sources of meaning.” (Giddens, 2001, p. 29).

As shown in Giddens’ words, people strive to express meaning through their identity. In a modern society that often is characterized as fluid and chaotic, it can be important for individuals to maintain a feeling of belonging and integration. Whether or not this feeling can be found through use of particular objects, I will try to explain further.

The fact that iPod is a technological tool for listening to music can be one main reason for its popularity. This aspect is shown in an article in Newsweek where the world of iPod is discussed. The index of the article presents the core in the article; “In just three years, Apple’s adorable MINI MUSIC PLAYER has gone from gizmo to LIFE-CHANGING cultural icon (Levy, 2004).

Interest in music can be an important brick in building people’s social identity. The social aspect of music is often something friends within a group will more or less agree on – what music to listen to, discuss – and hence it will be important as binding them together. The ability to easily share and exchange music files among peers can in this sense increase this feeling among friends.

Sociopod gave an impression of iPod being an important tool that kept him and his friends together. The iPod functions as a tool for sharing their similar interest: music. Because of iPod, they get to talk about music and a consequence of this is that they choose to exchange music files. Through this they can create and maintain the common interest. He puts it like this: “I think it sort of happens because you all start to sort of like

the same music, and it is sort of increased by this how easy it is to share the music. So, I find something – like a song that I like – want to share it with them, and I hope that they like it” (*Sociopod*). He also talks about how his identity and confidence are something related to having the same values as his friends. “I think I get a satisfaction if I introduce someone to a song, and they like it, I think that makes me feel good” (*Sociopod*).

To share a similar interest with your friends is not a new phenomenon, and music is something that has always brought people together, being an important brick in building the wall of personal identity. Special music styles have always been associated with special clothing and style in behaviour. People identify with certain types of music – and often the style that follows as cultural symbol for the music. Therefore, sharing a specific way to dress or behave often follows the common interest of music. Examples of this can be hip-hop music followed by a clothing style with characteristic baggy pants, and men wearing ear jewellery and caps. In a similar way, listening to heavy metal music is often seen as interlinked with wearing black clothes and long hair dyed black.

4.2 Desire for meaning – need for luxury?

I will now discuss briefly the existing discourse on the difference between needs and desires – and hence the *need* for goods and commodities.

Although the consumption society is a changing society, there are still some stable aspects. Human beings have certain needs, physical as well as psychological. The basis of the assumptions I will use when discussing this in the later chapters will be a theory presented by Abraham Maslow. “He proposed that there is a *hierarchy of needs*, ascending from the basic biological needs to the more complex psychological motivations that become important only after the basic needs have been satisfied”. In this

much-quoted model Maslow shows that basic needs are the same for human beings as for other mammals. In the bottom of the pyramid he placed physiological needs as sleep, food and so forth (Atkinson, 2000, pp. 471-472). According to this model, people will try to maintain homeostasis and hence – if a need is not satisfied, one will try to get balance, through satisfying this need. The feeling of lacking something can be experienced as a physical emotion even if it is not a basic, physiological need that causes the desire.

The need for goods and objects are in his pyramid shown nearer the top – as being closer to the need of self-realization. This is no longer a basic need, meaning that it is not crucial for a person's survival to have particular goods. But when the basic needs, and hence the base floor in Maslow's pyramid has been covered, humans will strive to fulfill other needs, such as being successful and gaining respect from others. This can be achieved through acquiring, using and *showing off* specific commodities. Even though I am writing mostly about people who have their basic needs fulfilled, I think it is important to bear in mind that also people without the basic levels of Maslow's pyramid achieved are trying to reach the higher levels.

The modern world of consuming goods is built upon the idea that people change their goods into better ones constantly. This can be seen in the way new products are offered to the consumers through marketing. Companies selling products would not survive if it were not for the human desire to buy new goods all the time. One interesting question is whether it is important that the goods are new, or that they are new and better, or maybe it is a need for getting more goods? The products your life is built around and

upon can be symbols of whom we strive to be, and help to maintain a constant change of some aspects of one's life.

To be able to participate in consumption culture means that you have a certain amount of freedom to choose. There are many different brands existing for the same commodities, and many lifestyles to choose among – if you have the money (Lury, 1996, p. 7). As I am writing about consumption societies, it is important to bear in mind that the economy is generally strong, on both micro and macro levels. What I am describing is the desire for buying and using goods that are not a part of basic needs, and thus can be referred to as luxury goods; commodities that help people to fulfill their *desires* instead of their needs. Thus, these desires are founded on other aspects than basic, physiological / biological needs.

Baudrillard is a great contributor to the discussion of consumer culture. In his work *The Consumer Society*, he thoroughly discusses how the reason for buying and using commodities can be seen as socially created, with the purpose of satisfying artificial needs that are maintained through the capitalistic system of production, marketing and, hence, consumption. “There are no limits to man's ‘needs’ as a social being (i.e. as a being productive of *meaning* and relative to others in *value*). The quantitative intake of food is limited, the digestive system is limited, but the cultural system of food is, for its part, indefinite. And it is, moreover, a relatively contingent system” (Baudrillard, 1998, p. 64). One legitimates who one wants to be, through more or less well considered actions. One action does not make sense in itself, but should be seen as part of a whole of actions. The reason for a specific act can often be explained better if one sees the actions as interlinked with a person's basic values in life (Blichfeldt, 2003, p.

12). The reason for buying and using specific commodities must therefore be understood as a complex phenomenon. What products people buy will often be interlinked with what kind of products this person already possesses. This can be seen as expressed through objects one is surrounded by.

4.3 Integration through Consumption

One characteristic aspect of capitalism is the economical expansion. For companies to survive, they must expand – and increase the sales rate. For this to happen, people must buy more products, and join the idea of constantly changing their products – even if not strictly necessary. Is it *necessary* to replace the sofa you bought two years ago with a new, better looking one? Do you *have* to buy new clothes if your old ones are not ruined? Where does this *need* to constantly change come from? People strive to change their look, their style, their products, and their goods; are they at the same time trying to change themselves and their social status?

Living in a consumption culture, we are further away from the level of producing goods than ever, but on the other hand more concerned with having objects and goods to be able to show others who we really are. The goods and objects have a specific, symbolic meaning for people.

Today, it is difficult not to join the carousel of consumption. Those living in capitalistic countries, and being raised within this carousel, will be affected by this reality no matter how they respond and decide to live within this society. Those who decide not to join this trend will have to take an active stand, and hence try not to be too influenced by the existing structures. People are trained to be consumers from early childhood,

living in a context surrounded by commercials in all mass media, in the streets, on clothes and so forth. People's well-being can in this sense be seen as their way to cope with this intrusive phenomenon. "The number and complexity of available goods in the marketplace grows enormously and individuals tend to interpret feelings of well-being more and more exclusively in terms of their relative success in gaining access to high levels of consumption" (Lury, 1996, p. 49). People have a need of belonging to a community, where some norms and rules are shared. This is also the case in cultures recognized by consumption.

Norms and rules within the society, and hence the feeling of being integrated, can be seen as linked to whether or not people are joining the consumer carousel. Integration has already been seen as important for people's well-being. The French sociologist Durkheim wrote about integration being of importance, and especially the feeling of having norms and rules integrated in one's life. Don Slater links Durkheim's idea of integration with consumption, and notes that Durkheim even wrote about this, claiming that market liberalism and capitalism could lead to anomie – being the opposite of a community known by integration, rather a society lacking of specific rules and norms – and hence create a feeling of chaos for the members. "Indeed, Durkheim puts forward one of the grounding themes of the critique of consumer culture: in premodern societies, economic scarcity went hand in hand with social regulation to limit the range of human wants and needs. Modern deregulation and industrial productivity let loose human desires which are in principle insatiable" (Slater, 1997, p. 75).

What defines a specific cultural society, a community – is that it has members sharing somewhat the same norms and rules. To be socially successful within a certain

community, you will have to know what these norms and rules are, and act accordingly. This is also the case when it comes to what is seen as luxury articles and normal commodities. There are special rules, what Berry calls 'social grammar' (Berry, 1994, p. 236).

One way of explaining the consumer culture as important and meaningful for the individuals is that it has integrative aspects – as communities most (Lury, 1996, p. 14). I claim that it is possible to gain a feeling of integration through the use of music in urban everyday life, and hence *control* the environment. The personal-stereo can create boundaries between one self and the environment surrounding. As the music being listened to can be seen as representing something that is familiar and wanted, it can create a feeling of safety and comfort. This is an important need for human beings, as it is presented in the second lowest level on Maslow's hierarchy of needs. The music in itself represents something familiar, if the music is well-known to the user, but also the use of ear buds in general. You send signals to other people that you are busy doing something, and hence, you don't want to be interrupted (Bull, 2000).

The idea presented above, on how people buy and possess different objects to maintain a shared lifestyle with others, builds upon a basic assumption that people have enough money to buy all the products they wish for. This is not the case. It is important to have in mind that not all people have the ability to achieve this *integrative consumption*. A feeling of despair and bad self esteem often follows from being poor in a society of mass consumption.

"The consumer society contains as well large groups of frustrated and disappointed humans. People who cannot afford to keep up with neighbours and colleagues strive after status. More and more people fall outside. Families with small children having a hard

time making ends meet. Single mothers who do not feel they manage financially. Homeless, unsuccessful, discarded people who live in bushes, scrubs and in detoxification centres. Their children cannot afford the newest cell phone or computer. They can't afford a car, bicycles for the kids or "silky moisturizers" for themselves. This is why advertisements are not only selling desire and happiness. They also produce depressions, anxiety, anger and frustration." (my translation, Blindheim, 2004, p. 67).

4.4 The iPod Community

A consumption culture can be divided into smaller communities devoted to specific objects, with specific consuming patterns. People having the same patterns can be interested in finding other members from the same community.

What is special about iPod users is that many of them are already devoted users of Apple. Hence, they will rather buy an mp3 player presented by Apple than from other companies. As written before, my informant *Technopod* described himself as a devoted Apple fan. Thus, before buying iPod he did not even take other mp3 players into consideration. This is, of course, not a random effect, but a fact Apple are quite aware of and take advantage of in their marketing. They try to implement the feeling of being a part of *the Apple community* when people are buying and using their devices. I saw an example of this when I visited a shop called *Surcouf* in the mall Place des Halles, Strasbourg, France (http://www.placedeshalles.com/carte_main.php). This shop is a specialized shop, selling products linked to various technology items, especially computers. The store has two levels, and in the upper level different producers of computers have separate areas. The area where Apple products were presented was different from the others. When entering the area for Apple products, I saw a large poster on the wall with the words *le village Apple* (the Apple village). This inscription implies that if you are buying the products of Apple, you will become a member of a community,

where all have similar taste for design and technological devices. For a community to be called a community, it is important that the members share the same norms and rules, and hence have a common attitude and behaviour. This will also be the case of the consumers belonging to the community of Apple. The users will to some extent have accepted the norms and rules presented by Apple. The strategy presented above is a normal market strategy. Most companies try to get the consumers to feel bonded to their products and company. With different strategies, for instance bonus cards, they try to make sure that you will choose their company each time you are looking for such products as they offer (this can be anything from bread at the local grocery shop to plane tickets from national airlines). First you need to get the attention of the consumer, the next step will be to get the person to buy the product, and later it is important to keep the person within this special community so the person will continue to buy more products. If the creation of a bond between the buyer and the company is successful, this can make the buyer feel obligated towards the company. This can lead to further purchases of products from the same company, and also be an impediment for people to see other available products on the market.

Since using different objects can be seen as a meaningful and well considered action, it is important to legitimate ones actions by showing the world that buying this particular gadget was not a random act. People identify themselves with the use of objects, and it becomes important to be a *user*. Hence, it can be interesting for users to discuss their experiences and challenges with the use of an object. *Sociopod* explained why it was important for him that others he knows also possess an iPod.

I think maybe you can identify with them maybe. I don't know how, but that may also be a possibility. It sort of justifies your decision to get one maybe, because other people maybe recognize it and appreciate it also. It is like a, if you meet someone who has a similar interest then you want to talk about it (*Sociopod*).

One effect of people being interested in discussing their objects with other users can be seen in the large amount of web sites made for those kinds of discussions. The object iPod is no exception in this matter; when using a much used search motor (<http://www.google.com>) on the word iPod + community, I found as many as 431.000 hits on June 15, 2004. When checking again on August 23, 2004 the number was 731.000. On September 17, 2004 the number of hits was 797.000 (<http://www.google.com/search?q=iPod+%2B+community&ie=UTF-8&oe=UTF-8>). This indicates quite clearly that the number of websites concerning iPod is increasing, and I assume this expansion will continue for quite a while yet.

The fact that identity and belonging to a group is important for people is something well known and taken advantage of in various companies. Producers of accessories to iPod have taken this into account and created several meeting rooms on the Internet, especially intended for iPod users. Anyone with Internet access can visit these pages – where the topics being discussed are the beings of iPod – including user questions/debates.

While cruising on the Internet, trying to find interesting web pages where iPod was discussed, I found a website created particularly for users of iPod. This website is called *ipodlounge* and can be found at the URL <http://www.ipodlounge.com>. The word *lounge* is a jargon for a place to hang around and meet other people in a nice environment; “The room in a house or apartment that is used for relaxing, and entertaining guests, but not

usually for eating” (<http://dictionary.cambridge.org/define.asp?key=47399&dict=CALD>).

As explained through this definition, a lounge has mostly social and psychological functions.



The logo of the website and the following web community shows an iPod relaxing on a chaise longue – signaling that this community is for users of this gadget – with something in common. This is to create a feeling for the users to be integrated in a cultural setting, through this online community. As I have shown in chapter 3, the design as an integrative and symbolic feature is important for many iPod users.

Since I am interested in how users of this specific gadget can be said to create a kind of community, I registered on the web site to see it from *inside*. When registering I was asked on what model of iPod I have, how much music I have stored digitally and things like that. I will not describe the website in details, but mention one particular aspect of this site: There are several links to articles concerning iPod, diverse topics to discuss, and what I find especially fascinating is that there is a photo gallery, where the members can send in their specific picture of iPod. Most pictures are of a person and his/her iPod in funny and more or less artistic compositions. There are also various manipulated pictures made in Photoshop (a software program), so there is no doubt that many of the contributors have spent a great amount of time on this project (<http://gallery.ipodlounge.com/>).

Different communities can evolve on the basis of common interests. To share something important like an interest or hobby is explained as phenomenon by Sherry Turkle in her *Life on the screen* (1995). When people are devoted to playing computer games, this activity can become an interest shared with other players being 'online'. It is possible to compete with other people in 'real time', if not in 'real space'; connected through the cyberspace more people can become a part of the same game. Who defines a community? Is being a part of a community an important part of one's self-identity? I think so, and this is why I am interested in the fact that being a consumer of specific objects can be a trigger for becoming a member of a community. This aspect of consuming goods is taken advantage of by several producers. When old, existing communities are not part of people's lives anymore, the market offers new communities; the marketing of particular products can help to create these specific communities. I do not claim that all users of for example iPod take part in these communities, but the possibility is there. The community is there, and it is up to you whether you take part in it or not. But, what kind of community is this? Is it long lasting like communities you find where both time and space are shared? The Internet is not recognized as being constant, rather the opposite. Its contents are constantly changing, and you have no guarantee that a webpage will have the same appearance two following days – unless it is a page you control yourself. Another aspect is that people taking part in communities like this are taking part with the computer being the tool for communication. It becomes a matter of definition. That people can experience belonging and a sense of 'being seen' through taking part in communities like this, makes it important in their lives. Yet this makes this form of communication no less fragile, maybe rather the opposite can become a

consequence. Online relationships between people can become quite intense because the participants feel lonely and outside in 'real life'. Well-functioning online communities can thus function as a substitute, and the participants can have basic needs as safety and belonging fulfilled in the moment experienced together with others online (Turkle, 1995).

The discussion of human needs and desires is not new. Does it lie within human psychology all the time striving for new ways of being satisfied? The term *conspicuous consumption* is a term originally coined by Torstein Veblen. He found it interesting that people have a tendency to consume in a way that can be explained as symbolic behaviour – the consuming of specific objects seen as luxurious goods. Berry writes about this in the book *The Idea of Luxury*. According to him, the symbolic behavior, conspicuous consumption can be seen as necessary for people having this behaviour, in a way to help them keep their self esteem and self perception on a specific level (Berry, 1994, pp. 30-32). He also discusses the difference between need and desire. According to him, *needs* ought to be seen as universal and non-intentional. On the other hand, desires can be more context sensitive, and what is seen as desired goods can differ in various cultures (pp. 8-10).

5 Conclusion

I have in this thesis shown how the use of a particular technological gadget can have social meaning to its users. The mp3 player iPod has served as an example of how people in everyday life might relate to commodities, and how this object can help people to maintain a view of their identity as social beings. *Technopod* do this partly through his relation to different technological tools in everyday life, and for him iPod also has a function as a toy. For *Musicpod* the main function of iPod is something quite else. For her it is a tool through which she can enjoy her main hobby – music. Music is something crucial in her life, and an important aspect of her self-concept. Through *Sociopod*, I have shown how iPod can have mainly social functions for some.

What my informants have in common is how the use of this particular object helps them to achieve meaning in life – whether this meaning is to maintain the social network, listen to music or find intellectual and pleasurable challenges in the tool itself. Every object being studied will show different user patterns interlinked with it. So, what is so special with the object iPod? Through the work with the typology and the other findings I have presented, I have realized that even though iPod is a technological tool made for listening to music, there are social and societal aspects linked to the use of it. These aspects are related to the symbolic aspects derived from iPod being a *brand*. As I have shown, iPod is presented as a brand from the producers of the product, Apple, and it is interpreted as a brand by both users and non-users. This can be seen by the way this gadget is presented in fashion magazines and various articles, both on the Internet and in paper versions. iPod is a successful, branded product. One aspect that follows from iPod

being a cultural and social successful phenomenon, can also be seen in the spin-off effect of the gadget. Through my informants and typology, I showed how technology and music are the two given aspects concerning the use, while the social aspect becomes a consequence. The innumerable existing websites concerning this gadget, where people can discuss various aspects of the use of iPod, shows that people have a need to share their interest with others. I have seen and explained this as an example of how people living in a modern culture recognized by consumption have a need to share values and experiences to feel integrated in a social setting.

The fact that the informants presented own and use iPod implies that they have more than this in common. They are included in a way of life that can be experienced as inclusive for those taking part in it. For something to be including for some, it has to be excluding for others. Who are excluded from the life as an iPod user – from taking part in the consumption of this particular technological gadget? Evidently, to get an iPod you have to have a strong economy, or sacrifice other aspects in life that are expensive, to save the money needed to buy one. I have in my thesis touched upon how it can be experienced as negative not being able to join the carousel of consumption. In addition, to buy an iPod does not only imply the buying of this particular gadget itself. To be able to use iPod, it is necessary to have a computer on a certain level, when it comes to storage capacity and processing speed. This implies that you have to possess a quite expensive machine before it is even worth considering getting an iPod. To understand the use of this particular gadget requires a certain level of knowledge about the use of technology. This will automatically exclude quite a number of people, especially elderly people and

women. It is still the case that women are more 'afraid' of technology than men, and it would be interesting to see whether there is a gender difference in the ownership of iPod.

When writing a thesis like this, one has to choose what filters one wants to view the phenomenon through. Had I chosen to see it from other angles, I would have found other aspects. It could be interesting to see whether the typology I am introducing could be possible to find in a representative population. This could be revealed through a larger, sociological study. The phenomenon could also have been presented from a purely economical perspective. Thus, the focus could have been how successful innovations and introducing of products like iPod can result in more spin-off products, and thus become interesting for the market in general. It could also be interesting to see if the phenomenon described is limited to western societies where most people have their basic needs fulfilled. If I had chosen a psychological perspective, I could see how the use of iPod makes people take more choices, as to what music to listen to, and where and what to use it for. And how will these choices and behaviour have meaning for people in controlling their surroundings? This is very much what Michael Bull is doing in his study. These are examples of how one phenomenon can lead to different studies. Also to show how it can be possible and interesting to follow the phenomenon iPod as a complex, cultural phenomenon in the modern consumption society further.

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Internet links:

- <http://www.apple.com/>
- <http://www.apple.com/imac/video/>
- <http://www.apple.com/ipod>
- <http://www.apple.com/ipod/accessories.html>
- http://www.apple.com/ipod/ads/wild_postings/wildpostingslarge.html
- <http://www.apple.com/ipodmini/>
- <http://www.apple.com/itunes/>
- <http://www.apple-history.com/frames/body.php?page=history§ion=h8>

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